

## Substance Abuse

### What is Substance Abuse?

Substance Abuse is a harmful pattern of use of any substance for mood altering purposes which leads to frequent and serious problems. These problems can affect performance at school, work or home. Many times, relationships begin to suffer. Individual abusing substances often have trouble with the law.

Substance abuse is not simply drug abuse. It also includes the use in inhalants, solvents, alcohol, caffeine, and cigarettes. Almost any substance can be abused.

### What Causes Substance Abuse?

There are many things that can lead to substance abuse, some of which we have no control over. Research shows that having a family history of substance abuse makes a person more at risk for alcohol and drug abuse. Also, individuals who have been victims of child abuse or who have been raised in poverty are more at risk.

Depression and low self-esteem also can lead to substance abuse. When people, children and teens especially, begin to have friends who use drugs or accept drug use as the "norm", they are more likely to develop substance abuse issues themselves.

### Symptoms of Substance Abuse

If you are concerned that someone you love may have a problem with substance abuse, there are several symptoms that you can look for.

- Loss of interest in activities
- Depression
- Suicidal thoughts or threats
- Decline in grade or work performance
- Forgetfulness
- Increased risk taking

If you are concerned that you may have a problem with substance abuse, there are also symptoms that you can look for in yourself. Begin with the list above.

- Getting drunk and/or high on a regular basis
- Spending less time with others in order to get drunk or high
- Planning substance use in advance
- Drinking alone
- Needing more and more substances to get drunk or high
- Blackouts – forgetting what happened while drunk or high

### What's Next?

If you think you or someone you love have a problem with substance abuse, you can contact a Local Management Entity (LME) for help.